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Gift of Personal Statement

By John J. McCloy

to the

Lyndon Baines Johnson Library

In accordance with Sec. 507 of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended (44 U.S.C. 397) and regulations issued thereunder (41 CFR 101-10), I, John J. McCloy, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed Lyndon Baines Johnson Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder, ~~and all literary property rights~~, will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.
2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by terms of this instrument available for research as soon as it has been deposited in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.
3. A revision of this stipulation governing access to the material for research may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States, or his designee, if it appears desirable.
4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the Lyndon Baines Johnson Library.

Signed John J. McCloy

Date 4/18/72

Accepted Henry J. Friedman for
Archivist of the United States

Date July 26, 1974

M: Sort of an observer.

Mc: Observer. He sort of sat in the rear. I remember thinking one time, "Well, I'd like to hear from Mr. Johnson," but he didn't seem to speak out very forcibly. However, he followed it all very closely. I've no doubt that his advice was sought outside of the room and that he was disposed to listen and to observe rather than to participate actively in the more public discussions.

M: But he wasn't excluded over?

Mc: Not excluded at all. Oh no. He was always present so far as I recall. It was always as a matter of course that he seemed to be there. I won't try to review all that tense period of the eyeball-to-eyeball encounter when those missiles were in Cuba. But I remember seeing him then and I remember talking to him after the meetings were over. I remember thinking he hadn't expressed himself on it, and I wondered what his viewpoint was. And I'd go up and talk to him.

M: Did he express them to you privately?

Mc: He was a little reserved, I thought. He was a little reserved about it. But no reason why he shouldn't be, because I wasn't really in the government then. I was just called in from the outside, and he was much closer to the chain of command than I was.

But you always had the impression that he was thinking hard and was following every nuance of the discussion.

Then after Kennedy's assassination, the first contact I had with him was when he got me on the telephone and told me that he wanted me to

become a member of the Warren Commission to investigate the circumstances of the assassination. And he got me down there for that purpose.

M: Did he have to convince you that you ought to do that?

Mc: No. I don't think he did. It was a very emotional period, and it was so obvious that something like this had to be done. He made it appear to me over the telephone that he was anxious that a little group be gotten together who would command the respect of the people, and that we should go into the thing with absolutely no holds barred, and to come out with all the facts and take all the testimony we needed because he sensed the historical implications of it. He told me that he had quite a difficulty in getting Warren to agree to act, and he told me who he was appointing to the committee. I think the only persons that he spoke of at that time as other members he had in mind were Senator (Richard) Russell and (Cong.) Hale Boggs.

M: Congressional representatives.

Mc: Yes, the congressional representatives. So I agreed over the phone to do that.

And then we had a meeting with him in which, again, he emphasized that we had carte blanche and that we were going to have all the power we wanted to have to make this investigation, and he gave us a very good authoritative send-off.

M: He didn't continue his direct involvement with the commission after it started its work?

Mc: No. Once he gave us the mandate we -- at least I -- heard no more from him. I'm sure Mr. Justice Warren may have spoken to him from time to time, but I got the impression from my own membership on the committee and what

Mr. Justice Warren as Chairman had to say to us from time to time that the President gave no further direction to it. It was simply "find the facts and report them."

I think he may have had closer contacts with Senator Russell, and probably did. But there was no indication of any pressure at all.

M: Was that Commission, in your opinion, allowed to do everything that it wanted to do in all areas?

Mc: I think so. If there was anything that the Commission didn't do that it should have done, I think it was the Commission's responsibility rather than anything that came from the Executive.

M: You weren't barred --

Mc: We weren't barred from anything. The Commission did have some sensitivity as to how far it should go in terms of public exhibits. Chief Justice Warren particularly had some sensitivity about publication of some of the photographs, of the X-rays, that -- looking back on it now, I would say that some of the X-rays that were taken in connection with the autopsy should have been part of the public record. But it was with the recognition of the sensitivity of the family and the requests of the family that caused Mr. Chief Justice to lean over backwards in that connection.

Later on I was sorry that we had not insisted on the full publication, or the publication at least of the X-rays. There were some colored pictures of the President's dead body that you wouldn't want to have a part of a public record in the archives, but there were some X-rays, that I thought could just as well as not have been --

M: It might have stilled some of the complaints that arose.

Mc: Yes, that arose later. And since that time another panel has looked at those X-rays, by the way, and it confirmed the fundamental conclusions of the commission.

Then I can recall being called down to Washington by Mr. Johnson on various occasions when he sought outside advice. I remember very vividly one time when he tried to induce me to go to Vietnam. That was when Senator Lodge first resigned from his position there. He wanted me to take Senator Lodge's place.

M: As ambassador to Vietnam.

Mc: Yes, to take his job in Vietnam. That was early on. That was quite a long way back.

M: That was the summer of '64, yes.

Mc: I objected to such an appointment. I said I didn't know anything about that part of the world; that I didn't think that it was my dish of tea; that at my age at that time, I felt that it would take two or three years out from my practice after I had spent so many years in government and I wished to return to the practice of the law, I didn't want to break into my practice again. I sought some continuity and I felt I had responsibilities to my firm. So I resisted his importunities in that regard. But I must say that I had a very strong impression of the man's force when he pressed me to take the job.

M: He tried to exercise the treatment at this time.

Mc: Talk about twisting your arm! He probably has forgotten about this, but